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East Timor and Indonesia
Some Implications.

Fifteen and a half years ago, in the fall of 1975, my remote upstate New York university received a large group of visitors from Jakarta. At its head was General Ali Murtopo, Deputy Head of Bakin, the State Intelligence Coordinating Agency, and informal chief of Opsus, the Suharto government's special apparatus for black political operations. With him were General Benny Murdani, recently appointed head of G-1 (Intelligence) at Armed Forces' Headquarters; Liem Bian-kie, a.k.a. Yusuf Wanandi, special assistant to Murtopo, a key Opsus operative, a specialist in American affairs, and a leading figure in the Center for Strategic and International Studies; Daud Yusuf, an Opsus economist who would soon become Minister of Education and Culture; Panglaykim, another Opsus economist of some renown; as well as various people from the Indonesian Embassy in Washington.

The purpose of the delegation's visit was not at all connected with East Timor, but because I had known Liem Bian-kie from the time we were students together in Jakarta in 1963-64, I took the opportunity to ask him about East Timor and Jakarta's East Timor policy. With his characteristic loud laugh, he replied: "Don't you worry. Everything is under control. The whole business will be settled in three weeks." Fifteen years have passed, and the business is still unsettled. Ali Murtopo and Panglaykim are dead, Daud Yusuf and Liem Bian-kie have fallen from power, and General Murdani's position has visibly declined since he was removed as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces three years ago. Almost all the other key people who framed Jakarta's East Timor policy in 1975 are either dead or out of power -- with one central exception: President Suharto, who today is the longest-ruling military leader in the world. In 1975 the President was still a vigorous man of 54. In another two months he will be 70, the age at which his deposed predecessor Sukarno died. The world has changed so much in the meantime that it requires an act of imagination to think oneself back to those days. But it is necessary to do so to grasp the implications of all the changes that have since occurred -- in the world at large, in Indonesia, and in East Timor itself. The contrasts may help us to think ahead more intelligently.

The World Context.

Historians are already identifying 1975 as the plausible apex of Communism's strange parabola of power in the modern world. In the Soviet Union, the Brezhnev regime's armaments program appeared to have created a rough parity with the military strength of the United States. The disastrous decision to intervene in Afghanistan had not yet been made, and only a few specialists guessed the magnitude of the growing internal

economic crisis. In China, Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai were still alive, their prestige still largely intact. A rapprochement with the U.S. had begun in 1972, but the PRC and the US still had no normal diplomatic relations, and the former was still excluded from the United Nations. No one then would have believed that within 4 years, the PRC would launch a military invasion of its Communist neighbor Vietnam. In Southeast Asia, the U.S.-supported regimes in Indochina were in their death-throes, and successful communist armies rolled into Vientiane, Phnom Penh, and Saigon in March and April 1976. Finally, the stable division of Europe between Soviet and American spheres of dominance showed signs of becoming unsettled with the fall of the Salazar-Caetano fascist regime in Portugal in April, 1974. In July, Colonel Vasco Goncalves, regarded as close to the leadership of the newly legalized Portuguese Communist Party, became Prime Minister in Lisbon. In the spring of 1975, leftwing military officers and leftwing political organizations were at the peak of their power. These revolutionary changes in Western Europe precipitated the abrupt collapse of the oldest and last European Empire in Africa. Independence was conceded to Guinea-Bissau in September 1974, to Mozambique in June 1975, to tiny Cape Verde in July 1975, and to Angola in November 1975. (We might pause here to note that no one argued seriously about Cape Verde's right to independence though it is one fifth of the land area of East Timor, and had less than half East Timor's population).

This context is worth bearing in mind for <u>two</u> reasons. (1) It helps to explain the policy of the United States and its allies in Europe, in Northeast Asia, and in the Antipodes. In almost any other period, before or after 1975, the U.S. would have been supportive of Portugal and its foreign policy. But in that year it was working hard, along with the Social Democratic government of West Germany in particular, to stem the leftist tide in Portugal, to remove the Goncalves government, and to destroy the influence of the Portuguese Communist Party. At almost any other period, the U.S. -- and perhaps Japan and Australia -- might have tried to restrain Suharto on East Timor. But as the rout in Indochina accelerated, it was strongly felt that the counterweight of a ferociously anticommunist Indonesia was essential. Even if the East Timorese independence movement had not been dominated by Fretilin, Washington, in those days, would have tried to accommodate Jakarta. But insofar as Fretilin then appeared to be dominated by committed leftists cooperating with 'undesirable' elements in the Portuguese military, there seemed all the more reason to wink at, if not openly to support, Jakarta's policies. There was one further reason which we should not overlook. The alarms of the Cold War had encouraged Washington to negotiate a secret arrangement with Suharto whereby American nuclear submarines could, against existing international law, pass through Indonesian waters between the Pacific and Indian Oceans without surfacing -- where they could be monitored by Soviet satellites.

(2) In the local situation the existing world-context had

its influence both in Jakarta and in Dili. We do not really know who, in Jakarta, genuinely believed that an independent, Fretilin-controlled East Timor might have provided a refuge for fleeing underground Indonesian communists, pathetic survivors of the vast massacres of 1965-66, or been willing to invite Soviet or other Communist personnel in to strengthen the infant East Timorese state apparatus and to keep US naval activity under surveillance. But I think we can assume that at least some senior military officers and some rightwing civilian politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, and intelligence types were so convinced. Even if we assume complete cynicism, it is likely that the policy-makers understood that, politically speaking, the world-context was completely favorable to their designs. To be sure, on the economic side, the situation was less auspicious. In spite of the OPEC-determined soaring of oil-prices in the fall of 1973, the state oil company Pertamina had managed to go bankrupt at the end of 1974, and foreign investment in Indonesia was still in its infancy. But Jakarta's anticommunist prestige was at its height, and it was the anticommuist card that seemed most likely to win support from the big capitalist states. At the same time, in Dili, the world-conjuncture made it plausible for ultraleftists to argue that one could play the same cards as Angola and Mozambique had played, and that there was no special need to accommodate excessively the anxieties of the real and honorary West. Hence what, from today's perspective, seems a certain naive optimism and even adventurism on the part of the Fretilin leadership (note especially their boycott of the Lisbon-sponsored talks between the various East Timorese groups that was held in Macao in late June 1975.) It was only too sensible to view the direction of world-events and world-history as on their side. Both sides seriously misread their respective situations, but in ways that in respect are quite easy to understand.

The Domestic Situation.

The years 1974-1975 were also significantly conjunctural from the viewpoint of Indonesian domestic politics. In January 1974, three months before the fall of the Salazarist regime in Lisbon, and three months after the spectacular fall of the Thanom-Praphat dictatorship in neighboring Bangkok, occurred the so-called Malari Affair. Culminating several months of student protests against regime corruption and repression, severe riots broke out in Jakarta on the occasion of Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka's state visit. According to official figures over 150 buildings were destroyed, and hundreds of people were injured. Popular riots of this kind had not happened since the collapse of the Sukarno regime in 1966, and, up till now, have never happened again. Aside from the international humiliation involved, and the damage to Jpanese-Indonesian relations, the other alarming aspect of the Malari Affair was that close politico-military associates of Suharto were deeply involved, in antagonistic groups, and that these conflicts were on highly

visible public view. In many quarters it was being said that the struggle over the "succession" to Suharto was under way. In the immediate aftermath of the Affair, Suharto abruptly dismissed General Sumitro, head of the Kopkamtib internal security command, and General Sutopo Yuwono, head of Bakin, the State Intelligence Coordinating Agency. The ambitious Sumitro, in particular, was believed to have been encouraging students and other dissastisfied elements as part of a sort of informal electoral campaign. Sumitro's chief antagonists, General Ali Murtopo of Opsus, whom the students had denounced as a Political Pimp, and General Sudjono Humardani, presidential consultant for magic and economic relations with Tokyo, were treated more gently, but never afterward had the same kind of power in the presidential palace that they had had hitherto. Benny Murdani, then an eager observer of the Pak Chung Hee regime's consolidation in Seoul, where he served as charge d'affaires, was brought back to Jakarta to take control of military intelligence (a job which includes the vital task of internal political surveillance of the military). And if this political disarray were not enough, there followed the financial disaster of the bankruptcy of the huge state oil company Pertamina, which unfolded from the last months of 1974 and culminated in February 1975. The debts accumulated by Pertamina's powerful chief, General Ibnu Sutowo, amounted to over $10 billion dollars (four times the foreign debt of the Sukarno regime so often abused for its spendthriftness) and their renegotiation involved protracted and humiliating bargaining with American banks and private businessmen, the American government, and international financial agencies. In many ways, then, the "team" which had helped bring Suharto to power and to consolidate his initial dominance was falling apart.

This context helps illuminate the development of Jakarta's East Timor policy in 1974-1975. In the early stages the key actor was Ali Murtopo, who felt his power diminishing, and was eager to show Suharto that he was as effective and trustworthy as he had earlier shown himself to be in stagemanaging the elections of 1971 and the 'integration' of West New Guinea, as well as in manipulating the collapse of Indonesia's political parties. Scarcely less eager were Murtopo's closest political aides, the two Chinese-Indonesian Catholics Liem Bian-kie and Harry Tjan Silalahi, for among the student banners during Malari had been some with the words "Hang Liem Bian-kie!" scrawled across them. These people thought that the same methods used inside Indonesia could be deployed in the small, backward neighboring territory of East Timor, and that success there would ensure their full return to power in Jakarta. How fortunate that events in Lisbon in April 1974 opened up suddenly such a golden opportunity. Suharto seems initially to have been cool to the idea of massive intervention, but later appeared willing to give the Opsus group a second chance. It is also likely that senior military men saw certain domestic opportunities for themselves in East Timor. General Panggabean, the Armed Forces Commander in Chief, had been largely marginalized by his ambitious, capable deputy, General Sumitro, and now looked for a chance to reassert himself, and reassure

Suharto as to the army's unity and loyalty. Furthermore, promotions in the military had been slowed substantially since the later 1960s, and there were surely plenty of colonels who welcomed the career possibilities of a little 'action.' Nor can one discount the possibility that Suharto himself, shaken by Malari and Pertamina, and aware that among the student accusations against his regime was the charge of subservience to foreign interests, saw in an aggressive stance towards East Timor an opportunity to play national hero.

Let me conclude this second section by stressing the importance of conjuncture. Had the Caetano regime in Lisbon fallen two or three years earlier, Indonesian intervention is much less likely to have occurred. Jakarta would not have felt itelf then in crisis, Opsus would have still been busy in West New Guinea and in domestic political manipulations, the army would have been more unified, intelligence would have been under the sober and cautious Sutopo Yuwono, and Suharto himself less under siege.

The Present World Context.

As we are all very much aware, today's world is utterly different from that of 1975. To borrow, perhaps unkindly, from Marx, one could say that all that was solid in 1975 has melted into air. Far the most important change has been the collapse of Stalinist communism and the ending of the Cold War. Stalin's East European empire has vanished, and the Soviet Union, now largely an obedient ally of the United States, is teetering on the brink of eonomic and political collapse. It has also, as a consequence, lost all significant influence in East and Southeast Asia. Post-Mao China is struggling desperately with a huge, complex economic, cultural, and political crisis. One outcome of this crisis has been the effort, since 1976, to link up with the economic power of overseas Chinese capital in the NICS and in Southeast Asia. Nothing better reveals this change than Peking's long wooing of the Suharto government which finally resulted, not long ago, in the renewal of normal diplomatic ties after a break of almost a quarter of a century. The revolutionary regimes in Indochina are also in very serious crisis, for reasons there is no point in elaborating here. The former Portuguese colonies in Africa, ravaged by external interventions and civil conflicts, as well as economic difficulties, have been making rapid accommodations to Western capital. We might add that in the last decade the once powerful Thai, Burmese, and Malayan communist parties have been, to all intents and purposes, liquidated; and there are signs that even in the Philippines the CPP-NPA has passed its peak and is heading inexorably downhill. It was for these reasons that already in the middle 1980s General Benny Murdani was saying something that no top military leader had ever said before in the history of the young Republic: "For the foreseeable future Indonesia faces no external threats."

The ending of the Cold War and the collapse of Stalinist and Maoist communism have thus had two very important, if apparently contradictory, political implications. On the one hand, the anticommunism which underlay the legitimations of authoritarian, rightwing military regimes in the Third World, including Southeast Asia, has been rapidly losing its force. I believe this is the case even in Indonesia, where a quarter of a century has passed since the physical elimination of the PKI, and where there are not the least signs of any revival -- not even overseas. On the other hand, except in apocalyptic Peru, old-style leftwing revolutionary movements, including guerrilla organizations, have lost their single most important resource -- more important even than guns and organization: namely, the confidence of being at the forward-peak of world history.

Of course, this change, crucial as it is, does not at all mean that economic exploitation and political oppression have diminished or that popular opposition to them has vanished. But the legitimation of this opposition has been shifting from, so to speak, the future ... to originary pasts. The signs of this were becoming evident very soon after Jakarta's invasion of East Timor -- along three axes. (i) Originary religion, as exemplified by the astonishing success of Khomeini's Islamic revolution in Iran at the end of the 1970s, and the spread of so-called fundamentalist Muslim and Chrstian movements in many parts of the Third World. (ii) Originary human rights, as exemplified by the steep climb of Amnesty International's world-prestige, the spread of organizations like the Watch Committees, and legislative enactments such as the Fraser Amendment. (iii) Originary nationalism, visible now throughout the old Socialist bloc, but also in a new contesting of the early post-World War II ex-colonial nation-state order. One might say this tendency got visibly under way just two months before the fall of the Caetano regime, when Pakistan was forced to recognize the independence of Bangla Desh. Since then, however, one can observe both the complete lack of effective opposition to the reunification of Germany, the near-partition of Srilanka, the pressure on Peking with regard to Tibet, the negotiations between Morocco and Polisario, Eritrea's virtual independence, and so on.

These movements differ from the older Communist-led movements in one other very significant way. Although they are inspired, to varying degrees, by World-Ideas -- revived Islam, revived Christianity, the rights of human beings everywhere, self-determination -- and often have external allies, they are also more visibly locally-rooted. The Bangsa Moro may get help from Libya or Sabah, and may feel itself part of a more confident world of Islam, but their struggle is a provincial one, without substanial ambitions beyond Mindanao and Sulu. It is very difficult to imagine seriously a world-wide Islamic, human rights, or nationalist conspiracy, in the way that a Commnist conspiracy could plausibly be imagined between 1920 and 1980. This change lessens the chances of such movements gaining

substantial external military support, but also puts a premium on different forms of struggle. It also lessens the chances of repressive regimes successfully externalizing their enemies and calling on international allies for assistance. Thus from both sides pressures are building for a more accommodationist style of conflict -- perhaps what we hear so much of now as 'democratization,' by authoritarian regimes, and by oppositions. We can look at such contrastive cases as rightwing South Africa and leftwing Nicaragua, but also Srilanka, the Ivory Coast, Mali, South Korea, and so on. Even more striking are the attention now being given to the Kurds, the justifications for the Gulf War, and the new forms of pressure being exerted to find a solution to the Palestinian question.

t a tangent to all this is the spectacular change in the world economic order, notably America's emergence as the world's largest debtor nation, the decline of the dollar, the rise of the yen bloc, and the economic successes of East and Southeast Asia. The speed with which capital now moves around the globe, combined with the end of the Cold War, means that ambitious regimes, including that in Jakarta, are having to adapt their style of rule. International capital is interested in stability for purposes of investment, but this is often a stability threatened as much by repressive regimes as by opposition to them. Since there are now very few regimes or movements which are explicitly <u>opposed to</u> capital and capitalism, regimes and oppositions are not as violently juxtaposed in capital's eyes as they often were in the Cold War era. This can mean <u>more</u> pressure on regimes than on oppositions. For example, the assassination of two Japanese businessmen in Manila is not very difficult to arrange, but the shock effect in Japan may be substantial. Japanese capital's response is more likely to be to withdraw, or to urge political responsiveness, than to urge greater repression by the Manila government.

The Present Local Context

As mentioned earlier, Suharto is among the longest-ruling non-royal heads of state in the world. In Asia only Kim Il-Sung, Lee Kuan-yew, and Teng Hsiao-ping go back further. One by one, the generals who helped him to power have died off, gone into quiet opposition, or have been removed from effective power. His eminence now is a deliberately lonely one. You would have to be over 30 years old today in Indonesia to have any memory of a non-Suharto regime, and the majority of Indonesians are under 30. Such durable regimes almost always have a contradictory quality-- in the short run they offer powerful guarantees of stability, but in the longer run they delay normal generational turnover, they encourage administrative sclerosis and rigid thinking, and they dam up pressures for change and other dissatisfactions.

In most ways, the Indonesian political system has not changed since the days of the invasion of East Timor, indeed, if

anything, it has become more rigid and more authoritarian. But this system now sits over a society which the regime's own developmental success has profoundly transformed. Indonesia is by no means a rich country, but it is much richer than it was 15 years ago, and a substantial middle class has come into being which is not confined to the capital city, but has components in all the regional capitals, many small towns, and even in some parts of the countryside. It is a conservative middle class, but it is not, I think, a frightened one, and it would like now to have a political role commensurate with its economic stake. Its way of life is the way of life of businessmen, its world that of bargains, deals, tax evasions, informal monopolies, managerial seminars, and trips overseas. It does not have any substantial interest in Suharto's pre-1975 'security state,' and does not have much sympathy with the repressions that as much as anything have spawned the recent violence in Aceh, as well as the longstanding resistances in West New Guinea and East Timor. Many of its younger members are uncomfortable with Indonesia's international image. Businessmen dislike, or are envious of, the Suharto family's greedy monopolism; lawyers dislike the government's profound contempt for law; many provinces dislike the financial-administrative arrangements whereby, even when richly endowed by nature, they are made financially-speaking completely dependent on the center. Students and intellectuals dislike the boring nature of the press and the dreariness of university life. More important, there is less and less feeling that all of this is <u>necessary</u>, or that it is what the outside world actually wants.

One aspect of the present context is exemplified by the recent visit of a group of big Japanese businessmen to the presidential palace. Concerned about future stability in Indonesia, they wished to discover what plans Suharto had for stepping down soon, and arranging an orderly succession to a younger generation. Suharto told them not to worry about stability because he would be reelected in 1993 and he had absolutely no plans to retire.

The obsolete character of the regime is well exemplified in the case of its East Timor policy. In spite of a recent official 'opening up' of the region, the regime's stance has remained essentially unchanged for 15 years, <u>despite its manifest failure and despite the external costs the regime itself has incurred.</u> The one 'ideological' adaptation has been to abandon, for most purposes, the description of the armed resistance as Communist, substituting for it the vaguer terminology of 'bandits,' 'subversives,' and 'troublemakers' which it also employs in West New Guinea and Aceh.

This rigidity curiously enough parallels, in a much more ominous way, however, its rigidity towards an enormously changed Indonesian social order. For it appears that the government also fails to recognize the consequences of its own policies in East Timor. It is hard now to estimate with any accuracy the depth and

spread of East Timorese nationalism in 1974-1975. But there is every reason to think that this nationalism has spread and deepened, along with the growth of the Catholic church, over 15 years of repression, isolation, and discrimination. Here again one suspects that feelings and aspirations dammed up accumulate in force, awaiting the moment when cracks at the top of the politically-imposed order begin to appear.

It is depressing that the government in Jakarta has never seriously reflected on its own origins. For the solidity of Indonesian nationalism today (by comparison, say, with the Philippines) can be directly attributed to the repressive character of Dutch colonialism, its police-state thinking, its manipulation of bogus legislative bodies, its anticommunist fantasies, and its belief that 'development' was the answer to all political difficulties.

I can not pretend to be well-informed about what has being going on in East Timorese society itself. But I get the impression that it has better adapted to the new context than its immediate oppressors. Many of the original radicals of 1974-1975 have been killed or captured, have stayed abroad, or otherwise disappeared from the scene. The contemporary resistance is much less go-it-alone; it has found ways to work with the Catholic church, to make its external relations more sophisticated and less one-sided, and to cast its struggle in the post-Cold War terms of self-determination, human rights, religious freedom, and so forth. It also appears more ready for a politics of negotiation and bargaining than was once the case.

This is why I feel more optimistic than I did even five years ago about the future. One lesson that history teaches is that change excessively postponed brings its own unlooked-for consequences.

As mentioned at the start of these remarks, Suharto is about to turn 70, which in Indonesia is an advanced age. It is true that he does not seem to have lost his astuteness at intraelite politicking, and there does not seem to be anyone yet ready to challenge him. As is natural, however, in someone of that age, moreover one who has been enmeshed in politics for 50 years, there are no new ideas visible. But it is, I believe, almost impossible to imagine any successor continuing his rule in the same vein. It is not only that no one will be in a position to stand as a hero of the Revolutionary War of 1945-49, or as a 'savior' of the country in 1965. The world and Indonesia itself have changed too much. Though delayed because of Suharto's longevity, I have no doubt that the worldwide movement in favor of a certain democratization is coming to Indonesia, and that there will be astute politicians prepared to take advantage of it. It is at this juncture, I suspect, that East Timor will again become a real issue in Indonesian politics, and, I hope some way out of the present grim impasse may emerge.